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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 007359

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ASEC, IN

SUBJECT: INDIA DEFENDS MUMBAI BLAST EVIDENCE POINTING TO
PAKISTAN

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Classified By: Charge Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶11. (S) Summary: Indian officials remain convinced that Pakistan is behind the July 11th Mumbai attacks, and worry that the US is setting the bar too high for "solid evidence" of Pakistani intelligence involvement. In an October 25th meeting with the Charge, Home Secretary Duggal indicated that this evidence includes video taped confessions. Press reports on October 23rd detailed M.K. Narayanan's statements that he was hesitant to say the evidence of Pakistani intelligence involvement is "clinching," but that it is as good as you can possibly get in a terror case. Op ed pieces complain that Pakistan has a long history of using "lack of evidence" as a denial and deception tactic -- including when it was developing its nuclear program in the 1980s and 1990s -- and that the US consistently backs Pakistan regardless of how outlandish Pakistani claims may be. Meanwhile, the arrests of alleged terrorists carrying military grade explosives (RDX) in New Delhi ahead of Diwali and subsequent arrests of two non-commissioned Indian Army officers on charges of spying for Pakistan, have added to rising Indian exasperation in the lead up to November 14th and 15th India-Pakistan Foreign Secretary talks in New Delhi. End Summary.

Backpedaling, But Defending the Evidence

¶12. (C) National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan appeared on

the popular Indian talk show Devil's Advocate on October 22nd, arguing that while there are some pieces of the puzzle still missing, the evidence that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) was behind the Mumbai attacks is "as good as you can possibly get" in a terror case. He said he is hesitant to say the evidence is "clinching," but it is pretty good. Narayanan used the opportunity to reinforce the popular perception here that Pakistan is to blame for the attacks, while answering criticism that the Foreign Secretary's and Mumbai police's statements about the investigation were not backed by solid proof. Press reports reinforce the widespread belief here that any evidence of Lashkar-i-Taiba involvement in the attacks also automatically implicates ISI.

Duggal: We Have Hard Evidence

¶3. (S) Home Minister V.K. Duggal told Charge on October 26th that the detailed information India has against Pakistan is substantial. He said India's case is built on several hard and several circumstantial pieces of evidence. (Details were briefed by the GOI to the DDI and NIO Nancy Powell on October 23rd.) This evidence includes travel documents, intercepts of the terrorists involved in the attacks talking to people in Pakistan, financial transactions traced through hawala channels, and video taped confessions. He said the GOI has traced the terrorists' movement across the border and their training in Pakistan. He said that although Indian intelligence agencies do not have documented proof of ISI ordering Lashkar-i-Taiba to conduct the attacks, the totality of the evidence they have and a year of bitter and bloody precedent leads him to believe that this was not an amateur operation and that it is simply not possible for it to have

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taken place without Pakistani government support. The planning, launching support, modern communications, and training involved all point to the Pakistani government. Duggal commented that he has been working with Pakistan for many years and it has always been very difficult. Even if you show them a video, they say it is still not enough. He added that although US policy on containing global terrorism is not in doubt, in the Indian public mind there is an ingrained suspicion that when it comes to Pakistan, the US is soft. However, Duggal noted that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh believes that you cannot wish away your neighbors and India must develop more areas of cooperation with Pakistan to achieve its economic goals. He said, finally, that he hopes Pakistan will interpret the joint mechanism with sincerity. Duggal confirmed that the details of this joint mechanism remain to be worked out when the Foreign Secretaries meet on November 14th and 15th.

Mukherjee Counseling Caution

¶4. (S) Duggal's final comments echo newly appointed Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee's first statements to the press about Pakistan and the Joint Mechanism on October 25th. Attempting to tone down the rhetoric, Mukherjee said "we cannot alter our neighbors, it is desirable to coexist and live with them in peace, and create a tension-free situation on our borders." He said India's economic growth depended on achieving peace and tranquillity in the region. He said little about the Mumbai investigations beyond promising that India's law enforcement agencies would share with Pakistan the evidence they have gathered.

BJP Echoing Popular Sentiment

¶5. (S) The BJP opposition, however, has been more vitriolic in its statements about the Mumbai investigations. At dinner with CIA Deputy Director of Intelligence Carmen Medina on October 23rd, former National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra

raised the issue of the U.S. response to the Mumbai blasts. "We backed you when you decided to take action in Afghanistan after September 11," he said. "Your evidence after 9/11 was no less circumstantial than our evidence after 7/11 in Mumbai." He went on to criticize the U.S. "double standard," arguing that we treat Hizbollah one way, and the Pakistan-based United Jihad Council very differently. The bottom line, Mishra said, is that there is a widespread perception that the U.S. is doing nothing to help India fight terror. Ambassador G. Parthasarthy, former High Commissioner to Pakistan, added darkly that Indian patience with Pakistan-based terrorism is not unlimited, and that many now argue that it is time to raise the cost to Pakistan for its support of terrorist organizations.

Pakistani Terrorists and Spies Abound

¶ 6. (C) In the days before Diwali, October 22nd, Indian security officials arrested alleged terrorists carrying RDX in two separate episodes. Police sources confirm that the first two individuals were arrested carrying 1.5 kg of RDX on a train from Jammu as it arrived in the New Delhi train

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station and the second two carrying 3 kg of RDX in a New Delhi market. By October 24th, press reports said Indian security officers had arrested two non-commissioned Indian Army officers -- one a Havildar (the equivalent of Corporal) posted at the Indian Army's Insurance Scheme and the other a Signalman posted in Leh -- and accused them of spying for Pakistan. India subsequently declared a driver from the Pakistani High Commission a persona non-grata, having accused him of receiving classified papers from those caught up in the spy scandal. Indian op eds link the two to the Mumbai investigation, adding to further frustration with Pakistan.

Hardline Framing Atmospherics for Talks

¶ 7. (S) Comment: Despite rumors of non-papers going back and forth about a solution to Kashmir, most believe that very little has been prepared in the back channel that can be announced in the Foreign Secretaries meeting. Regardless of the quality of evidence against ISI, without something tangible from Pakistan against Lashkar-i-Taiba in response to India's presentation, PM Singh will find it very difficult to stave off the Indian hardline and get the joint mechanism off the ground. The PM will be able to accomplish little else, including on Siachen and Sir Creek, if the hardline argument is strengthened by a lack of GOP progress against Kashmiri terror groups or by further acts of terror against India. Lack of progress on terror would also likely delay indefinitely the PM's long-delayed trip to Pakistan. Meanwhile, despite occasional improvement in the public mood, the US image in India continues to suffer from the ingrained public belief that our counter-terror efforts with Pakistan are too-narrowly focused on al-Qaeda and have failed to achieve an end to terrorist attacks against India.

PYATT